



Refugee Week

The Who, What, Where, Why and When of Refugee Week



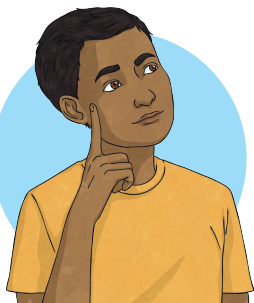
Who are refugees?

A refugee is someone who has had to flee their country to seek refuge because they are being persecuted (mistreated, intimidated, or oppressed) or are in fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. Some people might also become refugees due to war.



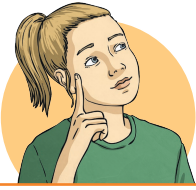
What is refugee week?

Refugee Week is a festival celebrating the contributions, creativity and resilience of refugees. One of the main objectives of the week is to foster a better understanding of why people are displaced and the challenges they face when seeking sanctuary. The festival encompasses a programme of arts, cultural, sport and educational events and activities, including art exhibitions, film screenings, theatre and dance performances, concerts, football tournaments and public talks.



Where does it take place?

Refugee Week is a nationwide celebration, with events happening in multiple different spaces across the UK. Refugee Week celebrations also take place in several countries worldwide, including France and Australia, and all include World Refugee Day on the 20th June.



Who can take part?

Refugee Week is an umbrella festival, meaning anyone can get involved by holding or joining in with an event or activity. Events are held by a wide range of arts, voluntary, faith and refugee community organisations, student groups and more. Schools are encouraged to organise events for Refugee Week to help children gain a better understanding of refugees.



Why does this happen?

Founded in 1998, Refugee Week was a direct reaction to hostility and resentment in the media and society in general towards refugees. There seemed to be a great deal of inaccurate and misleading information and ignorance about refugees and why they were coming to the UK, with many newspapers reporting that refugees were here for financial benefits and 'free housing'.

The Refugee Week organisers state:

"Our ultimate aim is to create better understanding between different communities and to encourage successful integration, enabling refugees to live in safety and continue making a valuable contribution."



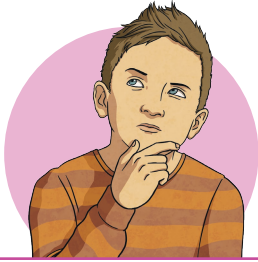
When is it happening?

Refugee Week is held annually around World Refugee Day. This year, it is being celebrated in the UK from 14th – 20th June.



What can we learn from refugees?

The countries refugees are fleeing from are often vastly different to that of the UK. We can learn a great deal from people of different cultures and with diverse experiences to our own, including different languages, foods, traditions, religions, artistic and creative skills, and much more.



What is the theme for Refugee Week 2021?

The theme of Refugee Week 2021 is, 'We Cannot Walk Alone'. For the duration of the week, people will be encouraged to reach out and extend their hand to someone who is outside their current circle. Whether that be by listening to someone who has had a different experience to them or by connecting with someone who is fighting for a cause they would like to get involved in.

Inspired by the theme 'We Cannot Walk Alone', people are also being invited to do one or more of these eight Simple Acts (everyday actions we can all do to stand with refugees and make new connections in our communities):

- sing a song;
- watch a film;
- have a chat;
- read a book;
- say it loud – make your own or print out and decorate a 'We Cannot Walk Alone' poster and stick it in your window or on display at your school, workplace or a space used by your community;
- play a game;
- walk together - On or around Sunday 20th June, join others for a walk in celebration of the Refugee Week 2021 theme 'We Cannot Walk Alone';
- join the movement – although Refugee Week lasts for seven days, the movement for a kinder, fairer and more connected world continues all year round. It is hoped that people will carry on the spirit and energy of Refugee Week, such as through campaigning or volunteering. Together, they will be part of a movement of people everywhere taking small steps to create a big change.

Ultimately, the numerous functions of Refugee Week are to raise awareness of the issues affecting refugees and the challenges they face; promote a better understanding of why people have to seek asylum by providing refugees with a platform to be seen and heard and empowering them to share their experiences and challenging the negative stereotypes by celebrating the contributions that refugees make to society.

Did You Know...?

According to the UN Refugee agency, at the end of 2019 in the UK, there were:

- over 133,000 refugees
- nearly 62,000 pending asylum cases.

The definition of an asylum seeker, refugee and migrant explained:

- **Asylum seeker** - has fled their country and is seeking international protection but whose request for refugee status has not yet been decided.
- **Refugee** - has had their claim accepted and is therefore living outside their country of nationality (due to fear or persecution) and are protected by international law.
- **Migrant** - chooses to move not because of a direct threat or persecution but mainly to improve their lives, such as by finding work or better education.

